

# The 2020 NPT Review Conference and the TPNW factor

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[http://www.luxembourgforum.org/media/documents/Arms\\_control\\_Burden\\_of\\_change\\_2019\\_preview1.pdf](http://www.luxembourgforum.org/media/documents/Arms_control_Burden_of_change_2019_preview1.pdf), pages 86-100

The 2020 Review Conference for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will mark the Treaty's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This review conference comes at a time of growing concern about a new arms race and the risk of nuclear war – a situation which has led to increasing contention within the NPT membership over the failure of the nuclear-weapon states to pursue the Treaty's disarmament obligations. This is bound to be a major focus at the review conference.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The non-proliferation aspects of the regime have been a major success to date, but the same cannot be said for nuclear disarmament. The lack of progress on disarmament prompted the Humanitarian Initiative<sup>1</sup>, highlighting the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. This in turn led to the conclusion of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). At the time of writing this paper the TPNW was not yet in force.

The TPNW proponents intend the treaty to complement the NPT. The two treaties have the same overall objective, the elimination of nuclear weapons, but they take radically different approaches. The NPT envisages a stepwise or incremental approach. The TPNW seeks to force the pace of disarmament by prohibiting nuclear weapons outright. The prohibitionist approach has been rejected by all the nuclear-armed states.

Because of the near-universality of the NPT, the states supporting the TPNW are all NPT parties. Thus the two treaties have members in common. It is not clear what implications this may have for the NPT review conference. Will there be a TPNW bloc within the review conference? Regrettably the emergence of a new treaty without the participation of the nuclear-weapon states serves to emphasise the divide between those with and without nuclear weapons. It is imperative that the TPNW does in fact complement the NPT – it is incumbent on TPNW supporters to do everything they can to avoid any adverse impact on the NPT. If the NPT is weakened then the entire international community will be the loser.

## Nuclear weapons – brief overview

There are nine nuclear-armed states: five that existed when the NPT was negotiated and are recognised by the treaty as *nuclear-weapon states*, namely, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China; and four outside the NPT, namely, India, Israel and Pakistan, which never joined the NPT, and North Korea which joined the NPT in 1985 but announced its withdrawal in 2003.

Today globally there are over 15,000 nuclear weapons. While this is a substantial reduction from the peak of over 70,000 in the Cold War, it is still enough to destroy the world several times over, and is well in excess of the numbers required for any rational concept of credible deterrence.<sup>2</sup> Over 90 per cent of these weapons (around 14,000) are held by the United States

1. <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/european-foreign-policy/disarmament/weapons-of-mass-destruction/nuclear-weapons/vienna-conference-on-the-humanitarian-impact-of-nuclear-weapons/>

2. See for example the US Office of Technology Assessment, *The Effects of Nuclear War*, May 1979, <http://atomicarchive.com/Docs/pdfs/7906.pdf>; and Bruce Blair, *Testimony to House Armed Services Committee Hearing on Outside Perspectives on Nuclear Deterrence Policy and Posture*, March 6, 2019, <https://qz.com/1566325/bruce-blair-says-trumps-nuclear-policy-could-get-us-all-killed/?utm>.

and Russia between them, and the remaining 1,000 plus are held among the other seven nuclear-armed states.<sup>3</sup>

## **The NPT – emphasis on non-proliferation**

The NPT was concluded in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. Today, with 191 parties, it is the most universal of all treaties. The NPT has three fundamental “pillars”:

- (1) **Non-proliferation:** *non-nuclear-weapon states* undertake not to seek or acquire nuclear weapons (Article II). They are required to conclude agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) accepting safeguards on all their nuclear material to verify compliance with their non-proliferation commitment (Article III.1);
- (2) **Disarmament:** the *nuclear-weapon states*, and all the other NPT parties, undertake ... to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. (Article VI);
- (3) **Peaceful uses:** parties have an *inalienable right* to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and undertake to cooperate in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy (Article IV). For the non-nuclear-weapon states the use of nuclear energy is subject to IAEA safeguards.

Since the NPT entered force most attention has been focused on its non-proliferation provisions, together with the closely related provisions on peaceful use. The non-proliferation regime has been remarkably successful in slowing *horizontal* proliferation, that is, the spread of nuclear weapons to further states. Prior to the negotiation of the NPT it had been predicted that by the 1990s there would be 25-30 nuclear armed states. Today there are nine: nine too many, but a far better situation than the pre-NPT predictions.

This success is due to a number of factors, particularly the effectiveness of the IAEA safeguards system and the near-universal uptake of *comprehensive safeguards* under the NPT, that is, safeguards that apply to all of a state’s nuclear material and activities. Obviously comprehensive safeguards do not apply in the nine nuclear-armed states, but they do apply in all of the other 62 states that currently have significant nuclear activities. All of these states are *non-nuclear-weapon states* party to the NPT.

### ***Non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are inextricably linked***

The objective of non-proliferation, stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to further states, is not only essential in itself, but makes an essential contribution to establishing the circumstances under which nuclear disarmament can proceed. Nuclear disarmament requires a stable strategic environment where the nuclear-armed states have confidence, not only that the other nuclear-armed states will honour their treaty commitments, but that non-nuclear-weapon states will do likewise: in other words, that no new nuclear-armed states will emerge.

## **Disarmament – an unfulfilled commitment**

Despite the obligation to pursue nuclear arms control and disarmament, since the conclusion of the NPT there have been no multilateral negotiations on nuclear arms reductions, and no negotiations seriously addressing how to achieve nuclear disarmament. The nuclear-weapon states have not shown any commitment to a diminishing role for nuclear weapons and their eventual elimination. On the contrary, it seems they expect indefinite retention of nuclear weapons and a continuing role for nuclear weapons in their national security policies.

3. Hans Kristensen and Robert Norris, *Status of World Nuclear Forces*, June 2018, Federation of American Scientists, <https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>; Arms Control Association, *Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance*, June 2018, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>.

In recent times the situation has deteriorated. The principal arms control agreement between the United States and Russia, New START, is due to expire in early 2021. The United States has not yet agreed to the extension of New START, and currently no negotiations are in hand for a successor agreement. Worse still, nuclear arsenals are being upgraded, military planners are considering new uses for nuclear weapons, and political leaders are even threatening use of nuclear weapons. Scenarios for “limited” nuclear wars are being mooted.

Critics point to the lack of specificity in Article VI of the NPT. However, the drafters of the NPT recognised that nuclear disarmament would take many years and a series of agreements to achieve. In the 1960s when the NPT was negotiated there was no prospect of reaching agreement on all the complexities involved. Accordingly, the NPT left the details of arms reduction and disarmament measures to subsequent negotiations.

Some nuclear-weapon state representatives have asserted that the Article VI obligation to pursue disarmament negotiations is limited, requiring only that negotiations are held. This is a misrepresentation of the NPT. The division between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states was never intended to be permanent: the NPT envisages that ultimately all the treaty parties will be non-nuclear-weapon states.

The interpretation of Article VI was considered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its 1996 advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. The ICJ concluded unanimously that Article VI is not only an obligation to pursue negotiations in good faith, but an obligation to bring these negotiations to an effective outcome, *leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control*.<sup>4</sup>

By failing to meet their obligation to pursue disarmament the nuclear-weapon states are not only prompting negative sentiment about the NPT, they are ignoring the very real dangers that nuclear weapons present to their own populations and to the world as a whole.

## Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

As will be discussed, the TPNW has attracted considerable criticism, some of which could have been avoided by more informed drafting. However, the treaty is important as an expression of the humanitarian objection to nuclear weapons, and it will contribute towards the delegitimization of these weapons.

The TPNW was opened for signature on 20 September 2017. The treaty will enter into force when it has been ratified by 50 states. At the time of writing, 23 states had ratified the treaty and 47 states had signed but not yet ratified.<sup>5</sup>

The TPNW prohibits parties, *inter alia*, producing, possessing, testing, deploying, stationing and using nuclear weapons (Article 1.1). States with nuclear weapons that join the treaty are required to remove them from operational status immediately, and to destroy them within a deadline to be set by the first Meeting of States Parties (Article 4.2).<sup>6</sup>

The TPNW also prohibits parties from *assisting, encouraging or inducing* anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a party under the treaty (Article 1.1(e)). This appears to prohibit parties from accepting *extended nuclear deterrence* from a nuclear-armed state. In other words, the TPNW excludes so-called *nuclear umbrella* states from joining, unless they renounce alliance arrangements that involve nuclear weapons.

4. International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, 1996, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/95/7495.pdf>, paragraph 105.F.

5. The status of the TPNW can be found at [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XXVI-9&chapter=26&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVI-9&chapter=26&clang=en) (accessed 9 June 2019).

6. It is not clear whether this deadline will be a generic time period (like “within 10 years”) or a specific date (like “by 2025”).

Regrettably the approach taken with the TPNW has polarised the international community.<sup>7</sup> All nine nuclear-armed states and most of their allies, totaling some 40 states, have rejected the prohibitionist approach and maintain that nuclear reductions are achievable only through a careful step-by-step approach.

In addition to the prohibitions the TPNW contains a number of other provisions which are problematic for many states.<sup>8</sup> Particularly concerning are the provisions on IAEA safeguards, especially those relating to the additional protocol for strengthened safeguards. The IAEA Director General has emphasised that without the additional protocol the IAEA is unable to conclude that all nuclear material in a state has remained in peaceful activities.<sup>9</sup>

The 2010 NPT review conference concluded unanimously that in a nuclear-free world the additional protocol should be in force for all states.<sup>10</sup> However, the TPNW contradicts this by mandating an additional protocol only for ex-weapons states but not for non-nuclear-weapon states.<sup>11</sup> Yet, as the 2010 review conference recognised, the universal application of the highest safeguards standard is essential to achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapon-free world. It is not clear how, in the negotiation of the TPNW text, a few additional protocol holdout states were able to prevail over the great majority that support the additional protocol. This outcome could have been avoided by a more considered approach to drafting.

It is unrealistic to expect that nuclear-armed states will eliminate nuclear weapons by a date set by others, and that umbrella states will immediately renounce extended nuclear deterrence regardless of their national security concerns. These concerns cannot be brushed aside. The 2010 NPT review conference Action Plan called for progress on disarmament to be accelerated *in a way that promotes international stability, peace and undiminished and increased security*.<sup>12</sup> It is essential to find ways of advancing disarmament that are consistent with these objectives.

## Ensuring complementarity

As the NPT and the TPNW have the same overall objective, the elimination of nuclear weapons, it is essential to ensure the two treaties are operated so as to optimise the likelihood of

7. The author's previous paper on this subject for the International Luxembourg Forum, *Nuclear War Must Never Be Fought: The Need for a New Global Consensus*, argued for an inclusive, collaborative approach, focusing on the principle of no nuclear war rather than prohibition of possession, see [http://www.luxembourgforum.org/media/documents/Revitalizing\\_Nuclear\\_Arms\\_Control\\_and\\_No\\_n-Proliferation-Moscow-2017.pdf](http://www.luxembourgforum.org/media/documents/Revitalizing_Nuclear_Arms_Control_and_No_n-Proliferation-Moscow-2017.pdf).

8. For critiques of the TPNW see for example Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Inquiry into the consequences of a Swedish accession to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, January 2019, [https://www.regeringen.se/48f047/contentassets/55e89d0a4d8c4768a0cabf4c3314aab3/rapport\\_l-e\\_lundin\\_webb.pdf](https://www.regeringen.se/48f047/contentassets/55e89d0a4d8c4768a0cabf4c3314aab3/rapport_l-e_lundin_webb.pdf); Norwegian Foreign Ministry, *Review of the consequences for Norway of ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, 28 November 2018, [https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/review\\_tpnw/id2614520/](https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/review_tpnw/id2614520/); Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, *Report of the Working Group to analyse the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, 30 June 2018, [www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/sicherheitspolitik/2018-bericht-arbeitsgruppe-uno-TPNW\\_en.pdf](http://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/sicherheitspolitik/2018-bericht-arbeitsgruppe-uno-TPNW_en.pdf); and John Carlson, *The Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty: Aim, Scope and Limitations*, APLN (Asia Pacific Leadership Network), July 2017, [http://apl.org/briefings/briefings\\_view/Policy\\_Brief\\_No\\_42\\_-\\_The\\_Nuclear\\_Weapons\\_Prohibition\\_Treaty:\\_Aim,\\_Scope\\_and\\_Limitations?ckattempt=2](http://apl.org/briefings/briefings_view/Policy_Brief_No_42_-_The_Nuclear_Weapons_Prohibition_Treaty:_Aim,_Scope_and_Limitations?ckattempt=2).

9. [www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/challenges-in-nuclear-verification](http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/challenges-in-nuclear-verification)

10. 2010 NPT Review Conference conclusions, Action 30.

11. Under TPNW Article 3.1, a non-nuclear-weapon state that does not have an additional protocol when the treaty enters into force is not required to conclude one. States such as Iran, Brazil, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia could assert this absolves them from concluding an additional protocol. See John Carlson, *Nuclear Weapon Prohibition Treaty: A Safeguards Debauch*, VERTIC Trust and Verify, Autumn 2018, Issue Number 158, <http://www.vertic.org/media/assets/TV/TV158.pdf>.

12. NPT 2010 review conference Action Plan, Action 5.

achieving this objective. The TPNW is predicated on the nuclear-armed states making the decision to eliminate their nuclear weapons. The NPT is predicated on the need for a step-wise process to reach the point where such a decision can be made. It follows that the most effective implementation of the NPT is essential to the success of the TPNW.

While a step-wise approach to disarmament is implicit in Article VI of the NPT, the definition of the steps is left for further negotiations. Frustration at the current absence of negotiations, let alone specific steps, does not mean this approach is wrong. However, it is imperative for the nuclear-weapon states to recognise the level of concern in the wider international community, and to demonstrate their commitment to progressing the NPT disarmament obligation without further delay. The obvious way of doing this is to commence the negotiations called for in Article VI. Further steps are outlined below.

For their part, TPNW parties need to ensure they support implementation of the NPT, and avoid acting inconsistently with decisions they have supported in the NPT context. The TPNW provisions on safeguards are an unfortunate example of a disconnect between what states have supported in NPT review conferences and what they have been prepared to accept in the TPNW. It is to be hoped there are no further examples of this kind. While it is not realistic to think of amending the TPNW at this stage, it would be reassuring if TPNW parties without an additional protocol demonstrate, by concluding an additional protocol, that they do not intend to exploit the weakness in the TPNW text. Other TPNW parties should be encouraging them to do this.

## **Progressing the disarmament agenda**

Progressing the arms control and disarmament agenda is essential not only to meeting the obligations under both the NPT and the TPNW (when it enters into force), this is also essential to reducing the risk of nuclear war.

A step-by-step approach has been elaborated in successive NPT review conferences, notably in the “13 Steps” set out in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference.<sup>13</sup> However, as yet there is no agreement to proceed with these or other steps. In broad terms, something along the following lines would provide an effective program of action. This list is not the same as the 13 Steps but has many elements in common. The exact sequence is not critical – what is important is to start the process and demonstrate the resolve to follow through.

### ***Major political declarations and commitments***

Above all it is essential to have a strong expression of political commitment and leadership from Russia and the United States, which hold over 90 per cent of the world’s nuclear weapons. Without such commitment and leadership real progress in disarmament will not be possible. Hence a major step in a meaningful step-by-step process would be –

- (1) A joint declaration by the Presidents of Russia and the United States that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

This would reaffirm the 1985 Gorbachev-Reagan joint statement, sending a positive signal to the international community that the two major nuclear powers will work together to make the NPT objectives a reality. US elder statesmen Shultz, Perry and Nunn urged such a joint declaration in their Wall Street Journal op-ed in April 2019.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently it has emerged that Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov made a similar proposal to the United States in October

13. [www.armscontrol.org/act/2000\\_06/docjun.asp](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_06/docjun.asp).

14. [www.wsj.com/articles/the-threat-of-nuclear-war-is-still-with-us-11554936842?mod=hp\\_opin\\_pos3&utm](http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-threat-of-nuclear-war-is-still-with-us-11554936842?mod=hp_opin_pos3&utm)

2018.<sup>15</sup> Russia reiterated its proposal on 26 April 2019.<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing the United States had still not responded. It is imperative for this proposal to be acted upon.

If a Russia-US statement can be achieved, this should be extended to a joint statement by all the P5. Indeed, it is reported that China has suggested a P5 statement. The impact of a joint P5 statement cannot be overstated. Further, the P5 acting together would be in a strong position to persuade the non-NPT nuclear states to join in or make similar statements.

- (2) Declarations on *no first use* (NFU). Nuclear-armed states would affirm that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter the use of nuclear weapons by others.

A declaration of NFU is the logical next step after a commitment against nuclear war. NFU is already the stated policy of China and India. NFU would obviate a *launch-on-warning* posture, enabling de-alerting and also addressing concerns about launch authority, discussed below. NFU declarations could be followed by negotiation of a NFU treaty.

Adoption of NFU would be a major step in changing mindsets about nuclear weapons. NFU would help reduce international tensions and contribute to building the trust needed for taking further major steps, such as ending the development of new nuclear weapon types and missions, elimination of tactical nuclear weapons, and elimination of silo-based weapons.

- (3) Establishing a multilateral negotiating process on nuclear arms control and disarmament including all the NPT and non-NPT nuclear-armed states.

While the Conference on Disarmament (CD) could provide a negotiating forum for both NPT parties and non-parties, the CD's usefulness is undermined by its consensus rule. Unless this rule is changed a more effective negotiating forum will be required.

To date arms reductions negotiations have been bilateral, between the United States and Russia. In the context of New START (see (6) below) the United States has suggested that China should be brought into further negotiations. China has dismissed the idea of trilateral negotiations, maintaining that the United States and Russia should make greater progress with arms reductions before states with much smaller arsenals need to participate.<sup>17</sup> While China's position is understandable, it overlooks a number of important considerations: the NPT obligation to negotiate applies equally to all NPT parties; the United States and Russia require assurance that as they reduce their nuclear arsenals other nuclear-armed states do not significantly increase theirs; China should consider its responsibilities as one of the P5; and it should think in terms of the positive influence it can have in future negotiations.

### ***Risk reduction steps***

- (4) De-alerting – removing nuclear weapons from immediate readiness/launch-on-warning status.

Currently the United States and Russia maintain substantial numbers of nuclear weapons on high alert for immediate launching if it appears a nuclear attack is underway. This *use it or lose it* approach is inherently high risk. Historically there have been several false alarms which could well have resulted in nuclear war. Even without this danger, maintaining nuclear forces on high alert is an obvious source of international tension. There is no need for a state that has a secure second strike capability to maintain nuclear forces on high alert.

- (5) Strengthening checks on launch authority.

It is a terrifying thought that some political leaders have almost unchecked authority to initiate nuclear war. A consequence of maintaining a launch-on-warning posture, for instance, is that

15. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3947593>; <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/04/19/us-ignored-russias-nuclear-war-prevention-pact-reports-a65313>

16. <https://www.apnews.com/3a86a5afa5424a149b72adfo1987c034>

17. [www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-putin-china/china-says-it-wont-take-part-in-trilateral-nuclear-arms-talks-idUSKCN1SCoMJ?il=0](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-putin-china/china-says-it-wont-take-part-in-trilateral-nuclear-arms-talks-idUSKCN1SCoMJ?il=0), [www.foxnews.com/world/china-has-no-interest-in-joining-us-russia-nuclear-deal](http://www.foxnews.com/world/china-has-no-interest-in-joining-us-russia-nuclear-deal)

checks on launch authority are minimised to enable rapid response in the event of surprise attack. This situation presents serious risks. The issue of checks on presidential launch authority is now being addressed in the United States; it is imperative for all nuclear-armed states to review their launch authorisation procedures and ensure appropriate checks and confidence-building measures.

### ***Progressive reductions in weapon numbers***

- (6) Agreement by the United States and Russia to extend New START and to initiate negotiations on a successor (START IV?).

New START is due to expire in February 2021 unless extended. Russia sees extension as a priority<sup>18</sup> but the United States has yet to agree. In what some fear is a pretext for inaction the United States has suggested moving straight to negotiating a replacement treaty on a trilateral basis including China.<sup>19</sup> However, even if China is prepared to participate it is clear that such negotiations could not be concluded before New START expires, so at this stage extension of New START must be the priority.

- (7) Reduction of deployed nuclear weapons, and progressive dismantlement of excess nuclear weapons.

Considering that current nuclear arsenals are well in excess of the numbers required for credible deterrence, it *should* be relatively easy to agree on major reductions if the parties can approach the negotiations reasonably. As noted above, if NFU is adopted it should also be possible to agree to elimination of all tactical weapons and silo-based weapons.

There would be a series of agreements on numbers and types of nuclear weapons in deployment, with excess weapons being progressively declared and dismantled. Recovered fissile materials would be declared as excess materials in accordance with (8).

- (8) Transfers of excess military fissile material to civilian use, or disposal, under arrangements to ensure *irreversibility*.

### ***Other steps***

- (9) Bringing the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty into force without further delay.

The CTBT was concluded in 1996 but is still not in force, due to an excessively difficult entry-into-force formula. The CTBT is important both to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and because the delay in bringing it into force is cited by critics as demonstrating the lack of commitment to disarmament.

- (10) Negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT).

This treaty would not only cap the material available for nuclear weapons, most importantly it would extend safeguards to all fissile material production facilities (enrichment and reprocessing) to ensure future production is not diverted to nuclear weapons. It is essential to find a way to progress the FMCT negotiations.

- (11) Ongoing development of verification, transparency and confidence-building measures in support of nuclear reductions and elimination.

States must not be able to claim lack of effective verification as an excuse for not proceeding with disarmament.<sup>20</sup> Another important area is to ensure transparency on nuclear doctrine

18. [http://www.china.org.cn/world/2019-05/06/content\\_74754398.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/world/2019-05/06/content_74754398.htm)

19. [www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/04/11/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/mike-pompeo-wants-china-join-russia-start-nuclear-treaty/?mkt\\_tok](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/04/11/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/mike-pompeo-wants-china-join-russia-start-nuclear-treaty/?mkt_tok)

20. See for example International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, website [www.ipndv.org](http://www.ipndv.org); John Carlson, *Verifying the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and Providing Assurance against Breakout*, Asia Pacific Leadership Network, February 2018, <http://a->

and nuclear stocks. In this regard it is regrettable that the Trump administration has reversed the US practice of transparency on nuclear stocks.<sup>21</sup>

### **Overall framework**

As a way of drawing all this together, the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND), in its 2009 report<sup>22</sup>, recommended a two-phase approach, with *minimisation* as the immediate goal and *elimination* as the ultimate goal. A series of specific steps would be required within each phase. The *minimisation point*, considered to be achievable within 15 years, would be characterised by low numbers of nuclear weapons – a global maximum of 2,000, with 500 each held by the United States and Russia, and no more than 1,000 in total held by the other nuclear-armed states – as well as agreement on No First Use, and force deployments and alert status reflecting a NFU posture.

ICNND considered that a target date for getting to zero could not be credibly specified at the outset, but analysis and dialogue could commence immediately on the conditions necessary to move from the minimisation point to elimination. A better idea of a pathway and milestones to elimination should be possible by the time the minimisation point is reached.

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The nuclear-weapon states must not continue to ignore their NPT obligation to pursue disarmament in good faith. Demonstrating that they take this obligation seriously will make a positive contribution to the 2020 NPT review conference as well as starting to address the concerns of the international community as expressed through the TPNW. Taking constructive steps to reduce the risk of nuclear war is in the interest of the nuclear-weapon states themselves as well as the entire international community.

Time is short. While some of the steps discussed here will take many years to conclude, some important actions can be taken in time for the 2020 review conference. A joint declaration against nuclear war is certainly possible, as is action to extend New START. Steps can be commenced to establish a multilateral negotiating process. National actions can be taken, and international consultations initiated where necessary, on NFU declarations, de-alerting, and checks on launch authority. The recommendations of ICNND and other international commissions can be revisited. An initiative could be launched for bringing the CTBT into force.<sup>23</sup>

The world cannot afford continuing inactivity on arms control and disarmament. If US antipathy towards these issues continues, Russia and China, with the United Kingdom and France, as well as key non-nuclear-weapon states, should work together to prepare the ground for when circumstances are more favourable.

[pln.org/briefings/briefings\\_view/Policy\\_Brief\\_No\\_57\\_-\\_Verifying\\_the\\_Elimination\\_of\\_Nuclear\\_Weapons\\_and\\_Providing\\_Assurance\\_against\\_Breakout](http://pln.org/briefings/briefings_view/Policy_Brief_No_57_-_Verifying_the_Elimination_of_Nuclear_Weapons_and_Providing_Assurance_against_Breakout).

21. [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/05/04/us-reversal-nuclear-transparency-policy-puts-uk-awkward-position/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/05/04/us-reversal-nuclear-transparency-policy-puts-uk-awkward-position/)

22. ICNND was led by Australia and Japan. ICNND's report, *Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Agenda for Global Policymakers*, is at [www.icnnd.org/](http://www.icnnd.org/).

23. See John Carlson, *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty: Possible measures to bring the provisions of the Treaty into force and strengthen the norm against nuclear testing*, March 2019, <https://vcdnp.org/ctbt-possible-measures-to-bring-the-provisions-of-the-treaty-into-force-strengthen-the-norm-against-nuclear-testing/>